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President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 154

United Nations Decade of International Law: marking of the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law

Report of the Secretary-General (A/54/362 and Add.1)

Letter dated 10 September 1999 from the Permanent Representatives of the Netherlands and the Russian Federation addressed to the Secretary-General (A/54/381)

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/54/609)

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at its third plenary meeting on 17 September 1999, the General Assembly is meeting today, under agenda item 154, to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law.

The General Assembly will first hear statements marking the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law. Thereafter, the General Assembly will consider the report of the Sixth Committee on agenda item 154.

Statement by the President

The President: It gives me a special pleasure to speak on the occasion of the closing of the United Nations Decade of International Law. Through the efforts of States, international organizations and institutions, including eminent representatives of the international legal profession, practitioners and academics alike, this Decade has been known for significantly contributing to the promotion of and respect for international law worldwide.

I also wish to acknowledge the presence of and welcome several ministers of justice from all around the world. These ministers, who are all women, have been meeting at the United Nations and exchanging views with each other as well as with other women in key lawmaking and enforcement positions in Governments and multilateral institutions in their countries. I am delighted that they are participating in our programme for the closure of the Decade of International Law.

Negotiations to reform, restructure and democratize the United Nations and, no less, to make its working methods more transparent are taking place at a time when the entire international community is hard at work analyzing the lessons of the past and making concerted efforts to find solutions to old and new problems and global challenges on the eve of the next millennium. It is therefore most timely and appropriate to examine the results of the Decade in the context of the important activities of the international legal bodies. I hope that the

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fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly will further enhance the reform process of our Organization.

We expect from this meeting concrete recommendations for future actions in the area of international law based on the results of a frank and constructive evaluation of the achievements of the Decade. This may include analysis of burning issues and finding solutions to problems that now stand in the way of our realizing the noble objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Success in this will not only affect the future role of our Organization, but also assist in strengthening the rule of law internationally as the basis for cooperative and mutually rewarding relations among nations in the new millennium.

I am pleased indeed to acknowledge the constructive contributions being made by the relevant bodies of the General Assembly, assisted by the Secretariat, towards achieving this desirable goal. These bodies include the Sixth Committee, the International Law Commission, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, not to mention others, such as the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization and, not least, the Committee which is dealing with the prevention of international terrorism. I cannot fail to mention various working groups of the subsidiary bodies that have been established during the Decade to deal with many topics of international law.

All of these have made constructive contributions towards the realization of one of the most important goals of the United Nations and, in particular, of the General Assembly:

> "promoting international co-operation in the political field and encouraging the progressive development of international law and its codification".

This mandate is provided for in paragraph 1 (a) of Article 13 of the United Nations Charter itself.

When the practical results of the United Nations activities and mandates are scrutinized, including questions about its relevance or efficacy, we must be able to reaffirm our complete faith in the United Nations and to declare with confidence that the world would be a much more unsafe and insecure place without it. The threats would be many: the law of the jungle, a vicious arms race, endemic social chaos, unbridled national rivalries, aggravation of disparities, unsettled conflicts and lawlessness, among others.

The United Nations has been and continues to be a unique and indispensable universal instrument for the survival of humankind and for our common development and progress. This role is, however, unattainable without proper international regulation and management by the established legal bodies. Can we really imagine modern international political and economic relations, trade, satellites, the Internet, aviation, technological and scientific activity, cultural exchanges, environmental protection, travel, the use of natural resources, exploration of outer space and other vital human activities without a solid international legal foundation? The answer is obvious: we need the United Nations, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The Charter of the United Nations, which forms the basis of the international legal system, entrusted the General Assembly with the task of consolidating, strengthening and developing international law. In keeping with this mandate, the General Assembly has conducted ongoing activities in this field. This has resulted, during the Decade, in the adoption of many ground-breaking major conventions.

Undoubtedly, the most significant achievement to date is the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Its adoption has been a truly historic milestone. I congratulate the trail-blazers, the movers and shakers, who remained steadfastly engaged during the protracted negotiations until the final victory was won. Congratulations to all of them, once again, for a job well done.

The task of developing and codifying international law must continue unabated even if it may require adjustment from time to time, in the light of any practical realities of modern life. On the eve of the year 2000, our planet faces new challenges of global cooperation and peaceful coexistence. We must master the techniques for the survival of humanity, of our civilization and of its sustenance. New and profound social, bio-technological and telecommunications innovations with far-reaching consequences are taking place today. The future is, more likely than not, going to be characterized by even more bewildering things we may not be able to conceive of, let alone comprehend, at present.

One of the challenges is whether we are really ready, as a human family, for the coming age. Solving

global problems or facing emerging challenges is hardly possible without effective legal regulation on a global scale. That is why important legal bodies, such as the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly, the International Law Commission and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law need further strengthening. As the world moves towards the twenty-first century, and we with it, we also need system-wide expert analysis, modification and elaboration of appropriate legal concepts and principles, as well as of their accompanying normative and institutional mechanisms.

I always, but particularly in my present capacity, have wholeheartedly supported all your efforts to continue, among other things, public education in all United Nations Member States on the importance of the rule of law in the fields of international relations, preventive diplomacy and multilateral negotiations. Involvement in this campaign of youth and children, the world's future leaders, should not be taken lightly. I believe that a rite of passage, from the old to the young, that is not based on a strong and caring family tradition is like a broken-winged bird which cannot fly. Law is, above all, about tradition and about differentiating between right and wrong, between truth and lies. Good citizenship, cooperation and devotion to justice are among the noble ideals that the rule of law is expected to promote in human society.

Let the next decade represent, preach and practice a culture of peace and tolerance. And not only that; let it also be known for respect for law, fairness in the administration of justice and for a fair deal for the poor and the needy of the world. May our beloved children everywhere in the world at last find peace of mind and protection from crime, abuse and forced soldiering and proceed to fulfil all their wonderful dreams. You of the legal profession must make the rule of law weighty, just and unrelenting for their sake and future.

I now call on the representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Hans Corell, to deliver a message on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Corell (The Legal Counsel): The Secretary-General, who is presently away from Headquarters, has asked me to deliver on his behalf the following message on the occasion of the closing of the United Nations Decade of International Law.

"I am pleased to convey my warm greetings to this distinguished audience gathered to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law. This has been a decade characterized by genuine and lasting progress. The underlying goal of the Decade was to promote the rule of law by promoting the means and methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States, by encouraging the progressive development of international law and its codification and by encouraging the teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law.

"The response of the international community to this noble aim has been highly commendable. International organizations and institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, have undertaken a wide range of activities. Not being able to list all the events which took place during the Decade, I would like to mention perhaps the most important example of the Decade's achievements: the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The establishment of the Court will constitute a giant step in the development of an effective system of enforcement of international law and of combating the most heinous crimes known to mankind.

"The 1990s have also witnessed the proliferation of regional and subregional mechanisms to supplement existing global legal frameworks. Specific examples include the regional human rights mechanisms established under the auspices of the Organization of American States, the Council of Europe and the Organization of African Unity.

"In the area of peaceful settlement of disputes, the Decade has witnessed an increased role played by the International Court of Justice and the reconfirmation of its importance as the principal judicial organ of the Organization.

"An important and fitting contribution to the closing of the Decade of International Law was provided by the celebrations of the centennial of the first International Peace Conference. The results of the discussions held in The Hague and St. Petersburg not only significantly advanced the themes of the first Peace Conference, but also helped energize a vital global debate on the role of the United Nations in preventing conflict and halting gross and systematic violations of human rights. The discussions have underscored the need for a more determined approach to preventive measures in

order to achieve the necessary degree of stability in the international legal order.

"Moreover, the realization of the programme of the Decade was characterized by an active involvement of non-governmental organizations and various segments of the legal profession. It highlighted their growing role in promoting a "culture of peace".

"Notwithstanding the achievements of the Decade, there is little reason for euphoria when we look at the current state of international affairs. International and national conflicts are still a part of our life today. Loss of life, untold suffering, hunger, dangerous diseases and denial of the basic rights of hundreds of thousands of human beings is a sad reality. Unsolved, urgent global problems still persist, posing major challenges to the entire international community. International law has an important role to play in meeting these challenges and in making our planet a better place to live. In order to deal effectively with the proliferation of intra-State and other violent ethnic conflicts, the international community must unite in confronting systematic threats to civilian populations.

"The rule of law is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to serve the needs of all the peoples and each and every human being on this planet through the effective functioning of a universal legal regime. As the Decade of International Law comes to an end, it is clear that the role of international law is greater than ever. It not only must regulate relations between States; in keeping with the highest principles of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international law must also serve as the ultimate defence of the weakest and most vulnerable individuals within States against violence and tyranny.

"I wish the General Assembly a frank, constructive and successful debate."

The President: Before proceeding further, I should like to inform members that in a letter dated 6 October 1999 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of October, requests that the General Assembly hear a statement in plenary meeting by the Observer of Switzerland on agenda item 154.

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the Observer of Switzerland on this agenda item?

It was so decided.

Mr. van Mierlo (Netherlands): The United Nations Decade of International Law is officially drawing to a close. At the same time, we are concluding the celebration of the centennial of the first International Peace Conference. I speak to the Assembly today not only as a representative of the Netherlands Government, but first and foremost as Chairman of the National Committee for the celebrations held at the Peace Palace in The Hague in May of this year.

The United Nations Decade of International Law was established in order to highlight the developments of international law, to enhance awareness of it and to promote adherence to its concepts and principles. By fortune and design, the timing of the Decade turned out to be propitious. Coming as it did at the end of the cold war, the Decade opened up avenues that previously could never have been successfully pursued. Issues and concepts that had been submerged for decades in the vortex of a bipolar world suddenly floated back to the surface and caught afresh the attention of the international legal community; and they required answers.

Now, at the end of the Decade, I want to briefly look back and look forward. In looking back, if I had to single out one achievement of the Decade, it would not be a particular conference or convention, nor any particular rule or concept. One level of abstraction higher, the single most important accomplishment, in my view, would be overcoming a critical barrier that international law has always been up against: compliance; holding parties to their commitments; making international law stick.

In fact, I remember my first classes in international law. As a law student, I recall our professor talking about *pacta sunt servanda*, about how Governments had to abide by international agreements. So the question was raised, "What if they do not?". The man looked bewildered, for we had innocently stumbled upon a cardinal weakness of international law. For the longest time, international law had been law without teeth. And

indeed, I believe that over the past 10 years we have come a long way towards giving international law more bite.

In speaking about such bite, I am referring in particular to international criminal law. Here, indeed, lie perhaps the most remarkable footprints of the Decade. Who, in 1989, would have sounded plausible when predicting that soon there would be an international criminal court to deal with the world's perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes? Who would have convinced anybody that regarding Yugoslavia and Rwanda there would soon be international tribunals effectively dealing with perpetrators of those crimes?

And yet, here we are. The Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda are abuzz with prosecutorial and judicial action. Indictments are issued, verdicts handed down and prison terms served. As little as two years from now, 60 ratifications will establish the International Criminal Court (ICC). No longer can perpetrators of unspeakable atrocities expect to get away with it. This Decade of International Law may well have brought us close to the end of the era of impunity. International law has finally grown the teeth it should have had all along. What better measure of success of the Decade of International Law can there be? What better way to cement the international rule of law? Personally, I will feel proud to see the ICC take up its new headquarters in The Hague, which, after all, was the venue of the first and second International Peace Conferences, in 1899 and 1907, and which since then has been the seat of various international legal institutions.

As the Assembly knows, at least two of these judicial bodies trace their roots back to the first Convention of the first International Peace Conference, in 1899. This brings me to a second example of how international law has grown teeth. For in 1899, the participants at the Conference adopted the so-called Declaration concerning the Prohibition of the Use of Asphyxiating Gases. That Declaration, even though it was groundbreaking at the time, was a clear example of international law without means of enforcement, as the First World War was about to demonstrate so dramatically.

Yet the Declaration laid the foundation for two important conventions several decades later. The first, developed at the height of the cold war, was the Biological Weapons Convention, which came into force without any means of verifying compliance by the States parties. Clearly, the time was not ripe in 1972. The other, of more recent vintage, is the Convention setting up the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Here we see an example of how international law has acquired more bite than anybody would have thought possible in the not-too-distant past. For in OPCW we are looking at an institution replete with means to inspect and verify implementation of the Convention worldwide. Its headquarters in The Hague are in full swing.

Who would not argue that we have come a long way? But then again, who would not argue that reality can overtake the law in the blink of an eye? For we need to remember that no matter how strong the law, the minds of policy makers remain a fickle element in that reality. History commands modesty.

Now let me look ahead at whatever future areas of development we may identify for the law, for, after all, that was one of the purposes of the Decade and, indeed, of the centennial celebrations. In other words, what are the blind spots in international law, the uncharted areas? I will mention only two, but I am sure that other speakers will identify different ones.

In the St. Petersburg sessions of the centennial celebrations, I took up the issue of small arms as one of the remaining gaps in international law today. The Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs had done likewise even earlier, about a year ago, in his famous Fridtjof Nansen memorial lecture. Last February, at a preparatory meeting of the centennial celebrations in New Delhi, some speakers even identified small arms proliferation as a greater threat to humanity than nuclear weapons. An estimated 500 million to 1 billion small arms are in circulation worldwide. They cause untold suffering, destabilize societies and prolong conflicts, and when conflicts end, they stand in the way of reconstruction and sustainable development. In 46 out of the 49 conflicts that have taken place during the Decade of International Law, small arms were the only weapons used. Needless to say, this was precisely the reason that the Security Council, under Dutch presidency, for the first time in its history adopted a presidential statement on the matter. Regulation of the small arms issue should be dealt with as a matter of priority.

But there are other blind spots.

One of the most pernicious dilemmas of our time is caused when human rights are being violated on a large scale, when a Government causes or condones random abuse or even slaughter of its very own citizens. What if the Security Council is not able to act to stop the

carnage? How long can the rest of the world stand idly by and wait until there are precious few people left to be killed or abused? The dilemma is a real one, as recent history has shown with shocking images broadcast the world over. Moral outrage reverberates around the globe.

The dilemma is also a political one. In other words, the blind spot I am referring to is the issue of humanitarian intervention, which sits on the cutting edge of law and diplomacy.

Two conflicting imperatives are striving for the upper hand: the obligation to respect territorial integrity and political independence, on the one hand, and the need to universally protect and promote human rights, on the other. The decision-making process in the Security Council often fails to offer a solution for this conflict of principles and, in this regard, the right of veto cannot be ignored. Sovereignty has been the cornerstone of international relations for at least 500 years. Yet 50 years ago we adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and 20 years ago the General Assembly stipulated by consensus that large-scale violations of these rights are a legitimate concern of the international community. How, in good conscience, can we satisfy both imperatives? How, on a sound legal basis, can we take action to protect our fellow man?

Here we have a virtual Achilles heel of international law. The law, as it stands, is not very adequate in handling moral dilemmas, and certainly not of this magnitude. Yet the debate that is presently under way is nevertheless, in my view, a debate that must be carried on. If the Security Council is supposed to remain credible in striving for not only peace, but indeed a better world, then that debate will have to be carried to its logical conclusion. I do not deny it will be difficult. On this point, views are diverging. Yet, here lies a spot to which we cannot turn a blind eye.

The Decade has come to a close; the centennial celebrations are over. But there is work to be done. How should we proceed? I believe we should proceed along various avenues at the same time. First, the United Nations bodies dealing with any form of law-making should continue to do so with all due vigour, notably the International Law Commission and the Sixth Committee of the Assembly. The international legal community — whether scholars, writers or practising attorneys — should apply their minds to the law agenda for the future. The American Society of International Law and the International Law Association provide fertile ground for new ideas. But certainly not least of all, policy makers of all nations and various levels should identify the tools they need to deal effectively with the realities of international relations. They should speak out and tell the lawyers what it is they are in want of. I bet that once they do that, the lawyers of the planet will have plenty on their plate. It will not be so much new law that has to be devised; more importantly, it will be a matter of implementing law that is already there and of devising ever more clever ways to really make it stick.

As I have said, the Decade is over and the centennial is history, but the real work has only just begun.

Ms. Rasi (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries of Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

The United Nations Decade of International Law has drawn attention to the necessity of having an effective rule of law in international relations. While the United Nations Decade produced many positive developments, it also witnessed most serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law. Its main legacy lies in the challenge it hands over to the years to come.

During the Decade, a new consciousness evolved towards a better respect for the rules of humanitarian law. The tragedies of recent years could not leave the international community unaffected. It has been strongly felt that there is a shared responsibility both to cooperate to prevent the crimes concerned and to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice. The European Union stresses the importance of compliance with obligations under international humanitarian law and the need to accept and use review mechanisms in the field of humanitarian law, such as the International Fact-Finding Commission.

The ideals of a more effective rule of law were promoted, notably through the establishment of the ad hoc Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and, in particular, by the adoption in 1998 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The measures taken give encouraging proof of the international community's determination to put an end to

the era of impunity for serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law. The European Union has actively supported measures to ensure accountability for criminal acts under international law. It was also the main aim of the recently held 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to reinforce the humanitarian commitment of the international community as a whole.

The immediate task of international criminal courts and tribunals is to try those suspected of serious crimes. In the long run, however, it is to be hoped that the main function of the International Criminal Court will be that of crime prevention. Increased awareness of the Court's ability and determination to try and to punish those responsible for serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law should effectively contribute to the prevention of such crimes.

There have also been other important developments in the implementation of international law. The International Court of Justice is occupied by a heavy docket, giving proof of the increased confidence of States in its activities. Similarly, other international courts and tribunals, whether on a regional or universal level, are seized of activities in such central fields of international law as human rights and the law of the sea, where the contribution of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is to be noted. On its one hundredth anniversary, the important role of the Permanent Court of Arbitration is also to be recognized. We encourage States to take advantage of these means of dispute settlement whenever possible.

The United Nations Decade has in many ways promoted awareness of the rules and principles of international law. The numerous conferences, seminars and symposiums conducted in various parts of the world as contributions to the Decade's agenda have spread and deepened knowledge of international law among students, scholars and practitioners in the field. A further challenge includes the dissemination of information on international law and its role in the international community among the public at large. Important steps to that effect have been taken — for instance, by the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda — in providing information about their activities to the populations of the regions concerned. The teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law will remain an essential element for the promotion of the acceptance of, and respect for, its principles.

The United Nations Decade received an appreciated conclusion in the celebration of the centennial of the first International Peace Conference at the Hague and in St. Petersburg in May and June 1999. We warmly thank the Government of the Netherlands and the Government of the Russian Federation for their valuable efforts in arranging and hosting the events of the centennial celebration. The report on the outcome of the expert discussions on the three "centennial themes" — disarmament, humanitarian law and laws of war, and peaceful settlement of disputes — bears witness to an extensive and open-minded exchange of views among legal experts from all regions of the world. Special thanks are due to the authors of the reports on the three themes, which served as the basis of the expert discussions. We also take note of the successful Hague Appeal for Peace citizens' conference, which took place at the Hague in May 1999.

The centennial themes were those of the first International Peace Conference. It is noteworthy that after 100 years they have not lost their validity. Rather, they have grown in importance. However, we hope that in the new millennium international law will focus on prevention and positive cooperation rather than on regulation of armaments, punishment of criminals and anticipation of disputes. While the themes of 1899 still retain their relevance, new issues have been added at the forefront of international law. In particular, respect for human rights and the need to protect the environment have been recognized as constituting major areas for a viable regime of international law. These goals were also highlighted through various projects and activities in the course of the Decade. A new awareness of the earth's environmental limitations was called for in the face of challenges such as climate change or threats to biological diversity. In the field of human rights, important developments included the establishment by the General Assembly of the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights as a follow-up to the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993.

Incomplete as it still is, today's system of international law is more encompassing and functions better than ever before. The list of multilateral conventions adopted under the auspices of the United Nations during the Decade is a positive indication of this. The list includes no fewer than 70 documents setting out binding rules of international law. The documents deal with the broadest range of subject matter — human rights, humanitarian law, environmental protection, disarmament, transportation, space technology and commodities regulation.

In the daily practice of international law, compliance is the rule and not the exception. Much of the existing body of international law is dutifully applied in the interest of all the parties involved. Still, the major challenge to contemporary international law lies in its effective application and enforcement. This was also made clear in the discussions that took place at the centennial meetings. While the progressive development and codification of international law continued to be considered important, the main emphasis was placed on States' faithful compliance with existing international obligations. Efforts to develop the law will be successful only if they are based on a commitment to its full implementation.

The European Union notes with appreciation the role of the Secretary-General and the legal secretariat of the United Nations in the lead of the Decade's activities. Their work has been indispensable for the success of the Decade.

Work towards the realization of the purposes of the Decade will continue. The end of the Decade will not reduce efforts aimed at the attainment of its purposes. The European Union remains fully committed to supporting all efforts to strengthen the rule of law in international relations.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): I have the honour to address the Assembly on this occasion, in marking the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law, on behalf of the members of the Group of Eastern European States. Ten years ago, at its forty-fourth session, the General Assembly proclaimed the period between 1990 and 2000 as the Decade of International Law. This last decade of the twentieth century has been dedicated to international law — its promotion, observance, development, codification and dissemination. The Decade of International Law was intended to commemorate, summarize, continue and intensify the developments achieved in these areas. Moreover, through resolution A/44/23 the Members of the United Nations recognized and highlighted the influence of international law in the realization of the overall purposes of the United Nations.

The decade of the 1990s has been characterized by globalization, multilateralism, universality, interdependence, regionalism and profound changes in the field of environment and human rights. In this decade the international legal order has been further developed, a number of new States have emerged, the new role and growing strength of the regional organizations has been confirmed, and strong emphasis has been placed on human rights.

As we evaluate the 1990s in the light of the Decade's goals as set out in resolution A/44/23, we notice remarkable yet uneven progress, which is evidenced in the exhaustive report of the Secretary-General.

The primary purpose of the United Nations Decade was the promotion of the acceptance of and respect for the principles of international law. Many activities aimed at strengthening the rule of law in international relations have been undertaken by various actors. The rules of international law have grown in number so that they now cover a broad range of fields of cooperation among States. Considerable progress has been made in particular in the field of international environmental law, international trade law, international criminal law, humanitarian law, law of the sea and maritime law.

Another purpose of the Decade was the promotion of means and methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States, including resort to and full respect for the International Court of Justice.

International negotiations constitute a flexible and effective means for the peaceful settlement of disputes among States and contribute to the creation of new international codes of conduct. For this reason, we believe that States should never renounce negotiations, not even when a dispute has been referred to another means of peaceful settlement. The identification of principles and guidelines relevant to international negotiations will contribute to enhancing the predictability of the negotiating parties, reducing uncertainty and promoting an atmosphere of trust during negotiations. To this end, we welcome resolution 53/101, adopted by the General Assembly last year, entitled "Principles and guidelines for international negotiations".

It is a pleasure to conclude that in the past 10 years the role of the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, has been confirmed and significantly reinforced. An increasing number of States have accepted the optional clause under Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute of the International Court of Justice. There has also been a considerable increase in the number of cases brought before the Court. It has contributed a great deal to the better understanding of many key issues of international law and to the strengthening of respect for it.

The Decade has also witnessed the creation of a number of new dispute settlement mechanisms at the

global and regional levels, including the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. To date, the Tribunal has already issued several orders and judgements.

The various important activities of the Permanent Court of Arbitration should also be recalled, one of them being the adoption of its optional rules of procedure for fact-finding commissions of inquiry, which entered into force on 15 December 1997.

As a result of all these developments, the judicial resolution of disputes may eventually cease to be perceived as an act endangering friendly relations among States and instead be seen as a means of contributing to the establishment of good inter-State relations. Today, international courts not only resolve disputes between States, but also protect the rights of individuals. In this context, special reference should be made to the reinforced role of the European Court of Human Rights on the basis of Protocol No. 11 to the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Decade will also be remembered for the establishment of two ad hoc Tribunals dealing with war crimes and crimes against humanity, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The rulings of these two Tribunals have further clarified some key aspects of international humanitarian law.

We believe that the Decade will be particularly remembered for the adoption of the Statute of the international criminal court, opened for signature in Rome on 17 June 1998. Reaching an agreement on the establishment of an international criminal court represents a landmark development in the international protection and universal application of humanitarian law and the protection of human rights, and thus it is of paramount importance for the international rule of law. The International Criminal Court represents an historic step forward into a new era of world order, which will influence both internal and foreign policies, as well as relations among States. We desire to see the Statute enter into force as soon as possible and enjoy universal acceptance in due course.

Furthermore, the Decade will be commemorated for the adoption, under United Nations auspices, of many important multilateral conventions which have considerably contributed to the progressive development of international law and its codification. Among those are the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel; the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries; the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings; and the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Decade also witnessed the entry into force of a considerable number of previously adopted legal instruments and the inauguration of new treaty-based international institutions.

We are grateful to the International Law Commission for its continuing contributions to the progressive development and codification of international law. We hope that the Commission will continue working as successfully as it has to date. However, there is no room for complacency, and an appeal must be directed to all members of the international community to bring to life, through their ratification, many legal instruments that have already been concluded.

Another objective of the Decade was the encouragement of the teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law. In this respect, numerous national, regional and international organizations deserve credit for their efforts in organizing symposiums, conferences, seminars, lectures and meetings on the various issues of international law as a means of disseminating the Decade's principles. Although the United Nations audio-visual library on international law is still in its preliminary stages of operation, we would like to see the distribution of the tapes to interested Governments and educational institutions begin as soon as possible.

United Nations achievements in this field also include the addition to the United Nations home page of special Web pages on international law. We welcome the completion of the database containing the United Nations Treaty Collection. Broad access, through the Internet, to the Collection, as well as to documents relevant to international law, is an important means of promoting international law. It allows maximum transparency and universal access to information and thus brings international law closer to a broader community of users, not merely to a select circle of Government experts and scientists.

We also lend our support to the continued efforts by the Secretary-General in the further modernization of the

database designed to provide Member States with quick and easy access to relevant information on international treaties. Therefore, we welcome the important steps taken by the Secretary-General, pursuant to the obligation under Article 102 of the United Nations Charter, towards the timely registration and publication of international treaties. The members of the Group of Eastern European States also attach special importance to the project initiated by the Treaty Section to update the United Nations *Treaty Series*, through a revision of the backlog by 2001.

As guarantees of lasting peace and international security, the principles of justice, observance of international law and peaceful settlement of disputes have been built into the Charter as the cornerstone of the whole United Nations system. The commemoration of the first International Peace Conference, which was a landmark event in the codification of international law, reminded us of the long and sometimes cumbersome process of international law codification. We would like to express our appreciation for the 1999 centennial celebration of the first International Peace Conference, with meetings being held in The Hague and in St. Petersburg. This celebration marked the continuation of a long tradition of the progressive development of international law and its codification, which started at the first and second International Peace Conferences in 1899 and 1907. We are grateful to the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for initiating the celebration of this centennial and for hosting the expert meetings to consider the themes discussed at the first International Peace Conference, such as disarmament, humanitarian law, the laws of war and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

These themes remain highly relevant today. We are glad to note the expressed need for strengthening the international order based on the rule of law, as well as the particular emphasis put on the duty of the international community to build peace and prevent violations of international law. We would like to thank all States, rapporteurs on the Hague themes, governmental and non-governmental organizations, groups and individuals for their contributions to the discussions, which have assisted in the elaboration of the topics propounded by the first and second Hague Peace Conferences.

The United Nations Decade has undoubtedly enhanced the acceptance of respect for the principles of international law and has encouraged its progressive development and codification. The United Nations, its specialized agencies and its Member States have taken many actions in order to reach the Decade's objectives. Considering the fact that the international order is still far from being completely built or systematically developed, it is important to retain the momentum gathered during the past decade. It is up to Member States to continue promoting respect for international law and for its progressive development and codification, while simultaneously encouraging its further study and dissemination. Hence, we believe that the conclusion of the Decade will not result in a reduction in United Nations activities promoting the progressive development and codification of international law. We hope that the end of the Decade will be the beginning of a series of new United Nations activities designed to ensure greater respect for and observance of international law.

Let us all invest our efforts to contribute to the developing globalization in the legal area, so that in the twenty-first century we will not speak only of world trade and world climate, but of world law as well.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I wish at the outset to associate myself with the statement just made by the representative of Croatia on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States. I should like also to add some further comments.

We are marking the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law proclaimed by the General Assembly, which has made a considerable contribution to strengthening the legal foundations of today's world order. The implementation of this historic initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement coincided with the years of a complete transformation of the global political architecture and the beginnings of movement away from bloc confrontation towards a multipolar world order. During the Decade, substantive progress has been achieved in the spheres of disarmament, of combating terrorism, of human rights and of the environment. There has been a breakthrough in the institutionalization of international criminal law and in the eradication of the culture of impunity. International humanitarian law, international trade law and the law of the sea have been further developed.

An event of the greatest significance during the closing phase of the Decade was the third peace conference, held on the initiative of the President of Russia. Like the Russian proposals on convening the first and second Peace Conferences, that idea was implemented jointly by Russia and the Netherlands and was a clear example of historical continuity and effective cooperation.

The Hague and Saint Petersburg forums, which took place in 1999, and other events to commemorate the centennial of the first Peace Conference made a contribution to the establishment of international legality and to the development of international law. These events were preceded by related forums with rich agendas, held under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Council of Europe, the Inter-American Juridical Committee of the Organization of American States and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, and by regional symposia in Melbourne and in Pretoria.

The Russian delegation would like to reiterate its gratitude to the "Friends of 1999", as well as to those who participated actively in the Saint Petersburg forum, first and foremost the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, Russian and foreign public and political officials, and the international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that made a major contribution to this event, which was so significant for international life. In the context of realizing the idea of a third peace conference, a coalition of non-governmental organizations — the Hague Appeal for Peace 1999 — acted with particular merit, confirming in practice the important role that non-governmental organizations are called upon to play in today's world.

Unfortunately, notwithstanding the scope of the achievements of the Decade, it is impossible to claim that all its objectives and tasks were achieved, including one of its top priorities: to guarantee the rule of law in international relations. There have been increasingly vigorous attempts to shatter international law and order, including some made on the pretext of the "inadequacy" of existing international law in the light of the nature of a new generation of conflicts. We see increasing attempts to promote the notion that respect for human rights should dominate other principles of international law, including the sovereign equality of States and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Various doctrines are being formulated on that basis, including those of "humanitarian intervention" and "limited sovereignty", which give a green light to the use of force, bypassing the Security Council and the requirements of the United Nations Charter. This creates the impression that those who advocate such doctrines view international law as optional and as permitting one to choose what one likes, discarding any rules that seem inappropriate at a given moment.

The norms and principles of international law are interconnected and interdependent, and they constitute an integral system designed to bar humanitarian disasters and ethnic cleansing, as well as acts of aggression. The arbitrary dismemberment of this system can result only in its destruction, which would bring chaos in this era of globalization. It is inadmissible to enter the twenty-first century under the flag of legal nihilism. The new century should be the era of a renaissance of international law and a time when the United Nations plays a role in the transition to a multipolar world. That is the core of the initiative by the President of the Russian Federation to create a world concept for the twenty-first century, including the development of the legal aspects of the use of force in international relations in an era of globalization. Discussion of all these issues should be the focus of the Millennium Summit in 2000.

As noted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Igor S. Ivanov, earlier in the present session of the General Assembly,

> "The world concept for the twenty-first century involves establishing a new culture which would aim to form a common system of values and models of behaviour. A world without wars and conflict, a world of democracy and prosperity must be the highest priority for all peoples and States". (*A/54/PV.6, p. 13*)

The United Nations has a special role to play in this process, for we view the Charter as the basis of the world order in the forthcoming century. Strengthening the international legal foundations of such a world order presupposes among other things: strict observance of the universally recognized principles of international law and international obligations and the formulation of an agreed interpretation of those principles and obligations for the common benefit of mankind and for the progressive development of international law; wider use of verification and implementation mechanisms and procedures to ensure additional guarantees against circumvention of international law; and a more active use of machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes, including enhancement of the role of the International Court of Justice.

Ensuring the primacy of the rule of international law is indissolubly linked to the democratization and humanization of international relations, and requires, first and foremost: the renunciation of claims to global dominance and the achievement of general agreement on

how to make progress in shaping a multipolar world order; minimizing the coercive measures allowed under international law, including improvement of the process of imposing, implementing and lifting sanctions and a clear delineation of their humanitarian limits; and minimizing human suffering and providing guarantees of human rights for all.

We support the Sixth Committee's proposal that the General Assembly should continue considering developments in the progress made in the implementation of the purposes of the Decade beyond its conclusion. We welcome the invitation to States, organs of the United Nations, international organizations and other relevant international forums to take note of the outcome of the centennial of the first International Peace Conference and to make use of it in the future.

A world built on a solid foundation of international law is one of the main purposes of the United Nations. The United Nations deserves merit in the eyes of history for making the 1990s a decade oriented towards strengthening international legality, a process that is gaining momentum. We hope that the conclusion of the Decade will not weaken the efforts of the international community to establish the rule of law, but will mark the beginning of a new stage of the further collective development and strengthening of the universal observance of principles and norms of international law; this would be consistent with the needs of mankind for the coming millennium.

Mr. Lee See-young (Republic of Korea): As the United Nations Decade of International Law, declared 10 years ago by the General Assembly, draws to a close, it is time to take stock of the progress made during the successive phases of the Decade and to refine our efforts for the future.

Aptly enough, the culmination of the Decade coincides with our commemoration of the centennial of the first International Peace Conference in the Hague, an event of historic import that ushered in the modern era of the development of international law.

Looking back over the Decade, my delegation is pleased with the strides that have been made in the progressive development of international law and its codification. This diligence has culminated in the conclusion of a number of significant multilateral treaties, among them the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses, the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries and the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings.

Above all, however, the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court last year represents a milestone in the progressive development of international law and its codification over the long history of humankind. My delegation further hopes that the draft convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism and the international convention for the suppression of the financing of terrorism, both currently at the final stage of serious deliberation in the Sixth Committee, will be adopted during the current session of the General Assembly.

In the area of teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law, my delegation highly appreciates the efforts made by the Office of Legal Affairs under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Hans Corell to promote the principles of international law by publishing useful documents and disseminating valuable information on United Nations activities in this field. The publications mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/362) have contributed greatly to the dissemination of international law to the general public as well as to academics, legal advisers and diplomats.

In particular, my delegation commends the Secretariat on the project to establish an electronic database for the United Nations Treaty Collection. Completed last year, the new database should promote the dissemination of international law and enable members of the general public to familiarize themselves with its norms and principles. My Government welcomes the Secretariat's invitation to Member States to provide electronic copies of their treaties when registering them with the United Nations.

Allow me to turn now to the centennial of the first International Peace Conference. Unlike previous peace conferences, which traditionally took place after the conclusion of a war, the first Hague Conference was convened to tackle such matters as the peaceful settlement of international disputes, the prevention of wars and the codification of the rules of warfare. In other words, its purpose was to chart a general course for maintaining international peace and security. Although the Hague Peace Conference failed in terms of controlling armaments and the means of warfare, it achieved

considerable success in two areas: the peaceful settlement of international disputes and the codification of the laws of war on land. The Hague Conference is also remembered as the first international conference that ushered in the age of multilateral diplomacy.

Furthermore, the Hague Conference produced the Hague Regulations, which comprise Convention II with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land as well as an annex containing Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Hague Regulations codified the core of customary international law concerning armed conflicts. Although the underlying clash between humanitarian concerns and the contingencies of war posed a profound dilemma and often led to the suspension of the Regulations, the Hague Regulations eventually became part of international customary law.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Governments of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Russian Federation for hosting meetings of experts to consider the reports and comments on the themes of the 1899 first International Peace Conference and the 1999 centennial celebrations.

We cannot and should not forget the ugly truth that, in the past 100 years, over 200 million people have perished in the name of the evil we call war. Still more alarming is the persistence of violent conflicts erupting around the world. To meet this challenge, the creation of a "culture of peace", as suggested by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, should be the goal of the international community for the next millennium. The ideals and visions that lay at the heart of the first Hague Peace Conference must endure as a beacon of light illuminating the path to a global culture based on the international rule of law.

As we commemorate the closing of the United Nations Decade of International Law, it is important for all of us to maintain the momentum generated over the past 10 years and to take the opportunity to mark a new beginning, to renew our commitment and to redouble our collective efforts. With a view to carrying them far beyond the twentieth century, we should reaffirm the ideals and goals first pursued 100 years ago at the Hague Conference and reiterated 10 years ago by the General Assembly. Indeed, our goals can be best attained by advancing the rule of international law and promoting its progressive development and codification.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): One hundred years ago, Japan was one of the 26 countries participating in the first International Peace Conference, held in the Netherlands. It was a historic event since it was the first international conference in which countries from various regions of the world participated, and it made significant achievements in the field of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the laws of war. The Conference was also important because all the countries participated in the negotiations on an equal footing and they succeeded in adopting various international conventions. It goes without saying that this was the beginning of the codification process of international law and the practice of multilateral diplomacy.

This year Japan is very pleased to have participated in the centennial events commemorating the first International Peace Conference. On this occasion, Japan would like to express its gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for hosting the Expert Meeting in The Hague in May, and to the Government of the Russian Federation for hosting the International Conference in St. Petersburg in June this year. Our thanks also go to the Friends of 1999 for their intensive labours, particularly during the preparatory phase of the centennial.

In the view of my delegation, the centennial of the first International Peace Conference, which coincides with the closing of the United Nations Decade of International Law and which could be considered a third international peace conference, was a great success. The continued need for an international order based on the rule of international law and the continued duty of the international community to build peace and to prevent and suppress violations of international rules were stressed during the centennial. These are fundamental principles to which Japan firmly adheres.

Today let me touch upon the conclusions that were reached on each of the centennial themes.

The first theme was disarmament. It is undeniable that considerable progress has been made in the field of disarmament and arms control, especially since the end of the cold war. A wide range of concrete measures have been implemented, such as the reduction of nuclear weapons by the United States and the Russian Federation, the dismantling and disposal of excess nuclear weapons, a moratorium on the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes and the placement of excess fissile materials under international control. In addition, new nuclear-weapon-free zones have been created in Africa and South-East Asia, and the International Atomic

Energy Agency's Model Additional Protocol was also concluded.

These efforts deserve our genuine appreciation. However, as pointed out during the centennial, it is also an irrefutable fact that efforts in the pursuit of disarmament have been stalled during the past several years. For instance, since the conclusion of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to embark on substantive work, such as negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty and discussions on nuclear disarmament in general.

Against this background, various useful suggestions and appeals were made by participants during the centennial in the areas of disarmament and arms control. The early entry into force of the CTBT, the early conclusion of the negotiations on and the entry into force of a fissile material cut-off treaty, and progress in the START process are some examples of objectives that may be realized in the near future. However, as to the suggestion to hold discussions on the international legal aspects of disarmament and security matters within the Sixth Committee, my delegation would like to caution against such a proposal because, in our view, those issues are appropriately dealt with in other forums.

During the centennial the importance of the issue of small arms was also stressed by participants. Japan attaches great importance to this question since it is these weapons that are actually killing people in various conflicts around the world. We welcome various recommendations made during the centennial. We need to study them carefully for future implementation. Japan strongly hopes that substantive and early progress will be made in the field of disarmament and arms control in the light of the conclusions of the centennial.

The second theme was humanitarian law and laws of war. While it goes without saying that we have a legal obligation to abide by relevant international law, it is also true, regrettably, that compliance with international humanitarian law and the law of armed conflict needs to be further improved in the wake of numerous violations of such norms. We must create a "culture of compliance" with international humanitarian law, and it is therefore necessary that we work out concrete measures to promote compliance with existing law in this field. Several suggestions were made for that purpose during the centennial, and they need to be taken into serious consideration by the parties concerned. In particular, educational and training measures designed to ensure that the principles of international humanitarian law are widely understood are of vital importance.

Japan would also like to stress, in this field, the historic significance of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. As you, Mr. President, pointed out at the beginning of this meeting, our dream finally came true. We are pleased to note that more than 80 States have already signed the Statute and that four States have already ratified it. Japan intends to participate actively and constructively in the Preparatory Commission, with a view to the early establishment of the Court.

As concerns the third theme — peaceful settlement of disputes — Japan believes that the existing mechanisms for dispute settlement are of great importance, and we encourage States to make greater use of such mechanisms. In the field of the peaceful settlement of disputes, Japan would like to stress, in particular, that the International Court of Justice is playing a very important role.

On this occasion, we would like to reiterate our appeal to States which have not yet done so to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. Moreover, as stressed during the centennial, the Court's Trust Fund deserves further support. The purpose of this Trust Fund is to provide financial assistance for expenses incurred in connection with a dispute submitted to the International Court of Justice or the execution of a judgment of the Court. It is my great pleasure in this regard to recall in this final year of the Decade of International Law that the Government of Japan has contributed more than $200,000 during the Decade to the Trust Fund to assist States in the judicial settlement of disputes through the world Court. This amount represents more than 20 per cent of the total contributions made by States on a voluntary basis. The Government of Japan's annual contributions to this Trust Fund are a clear expression of its support of the principle of the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

The curtain is now falling on the United Nations Decade of International Law, to which the centennial event made a significant contribution. It would be unfortunate if we were to consider the centennial as just a ceremonial conference. Rather, it is incumbent upon us now to follow up the centennial and to develop further the spirit engendered at The Hague and St. Petersburg as we enter the next millennium.

Mr. Ibrahim (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today, we mark the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law in the light of its successes and achievements since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 44/23 of 17 November 1989. These achievements have demonstrated the readiness and heartfelt desire of the international community to fulfil the purposes of the Decade, which are, *inter alia*, to promote acceptance of and respect for the principles of international law; to promote means and methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States; and to encourage the teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law.

My country wishes to refer to the significant events that have taken place over the course of the Decade. These include the establishment of the two International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, as well as the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We also appreciate the efforts made by the Governments of the Russian Federation and the Netherlands to prepare the centennial of the 1899 International Peace Conference. We express our appreciation of the practical results of the Expert Meeting held in The Hague in May 1999 and of the International Conference to mark the centennial of the 1899 First International Peace Conference, held in St. Petersburg, Russia, in June this year. We consider this work to be a significant contribution to the Decade.

In recognition of international law and its growing role in the organization of international relations, Yemen has adapted its Constitution to reflect, in its sixth article, a clear affirmation of its harmonization with the United Nations Charter and internationally-recognized norms of international law. Over the course of the Decade, my country, like others, has contributed to achieving the purposes of the Decade.

With regard to promoting the acceptance of and respect for the principles of international law, we have acceded to such multilateral instruments as the United Nations Convention against Torture; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa; the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances; and the Implementing Agreement on Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

My Government attaches great importance to the ways and means of implementation of multilateral treaties. Many national committees have been established to follow up Yemen's implementation of the instruments to which it is party. Among these are the Supreme National Committee for Human Rights, the Committee on Women, the National Council for Children, the National Committee for Mine Clearance, the National Atomic Energy Commission and the Environmental Protection Council. Recently, the Ministerial Council endorsed the establishment of a national committee on humanitarian law.

My country considers the peaceful settlement of disputes to be the cornerstone of its international policy and promotes all ways and means to achieve that objective. The United Nations Decade of International Law witnessed two significant events in the history of the region that bear witness to Yemen's commitment to the peaceful settlement of conflicts. The first was its signing of the border-demarcation agreement with Oman on 1 October 1992, a copy of which was deposited by the delegations of the two States with the Secretary-General on 4 February 1994. The second was its decision to resort to international arbitration to resolve its conflict with Eritrea over the Red Sea island of Greater Hanish and its unconditional acceptance of the arbitration ruling on 9 October, 1998.

With respect to encouraging the teaching, study, dissemination and wider application of international law, all of Yemen's law faculties teach this as a fundamental course. Indeed, it is on the curriculum of many other colleges as well. The Foreign Ministry provides scholars with the necessary documents on international law. In cooperation with a number of universities and research institutes in Yemen, many symposiums and workshops have been organized to discuss specific issues of international law. The Supreme National Committee for Human Rights, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme office in Sana'a, has organized symposiums on human rights in conformity with international instruments, and special symposiums on the rights of women and children. Two symposiums were organized on international humanitarian law, with the participation of representatives of governmental organizations, to promote the study and understanding of refugee laws and protocols and ways of addressing the problems of refugees, since Yemen, in particular,

receives many refugees from the wars in the Horn of Africa. In October 1999, a symposium for prosecutors was organized in Sana'a in which 160 security officials participated. It included educational and guidance lectures in the field of human rights. In closing this symposium, Adbul Jammal, our Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Chairman of the Supreme National Committee on Human Rights, stated that he plans to include all human rights issues in the curriculums of schools and universities.

As we mark the end of the Decade, we must thank the Secretary-General, the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, the Sixth Committee, the International Law Commission and all the States and organizations that contributed effectively to making the programmes of the Decade successful. We look forward to the continuation of this momentum over the next few years because the objectives of the United Nations Decade of International Law are still relevant and necessary to achieve the United Nations goals.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan)(*spoke in Arabic*): It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of the Group of African States on this occasion when the General Assembly is marking the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law. If the Decade gave us ample opportunity to promote abidance by the principles of international law, the marking of the end of the Decade is a propitious time for us to contemplate the role that the law has played in consolidating international peace and security despite some setbacks.

It is also a special occasion for assessing its influence on relations among States, on promoting international cooperation and on enhancing exchanges in areas of mutual interest and benefit. The marking of the end of the Decade is furthermore an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the principles of international law and our respect for it.

The African Group is pleased to see the international community making great progress in advancing the process of codification of international law and in providing the mechanisms necessary for its enforcement by adopting the Rome Statute for the establishment of the International Criminal Court, thereby broadening the scope of application of international law and allowing it decisively to encompass individuals and States in both its subject matter and its jurisdiction. The Rome Statute will enter into force in the near future, and we in the African Group, in the spirit of law and justice and inspired by lessons learned from the distant and recent past, hope that the Statute of the Court will include in its jurisdiction all the heinous crimes that have long plagued human society and robbed it of peace and security. We also look forward to the Court's assumption of its noble duty on a solid basis of fairness and equity.

It is our belief that the four goals set by the General Assembly for the United Nations Decade of International Law basically reflect one main objective: adherence to the spirit of peace, even in times of dispute and conflict. It is also our conviction that international law is the main mechanism for the resolution of disputes and conflicts and the appropriate instrument for the maintenance and rebuilding of peace. It is only natural that the United Nations Charter has been repeatedly cited and that its critical importance to the maintenance of international peace and security has been frequently confirmed and reaffirmed because of its provisions that call for the peaceful settlement of disputes. It was also quite natural for the Decade's statement of objectives to dwell on the need to promote resort to and full respect for the International Court of Justice, acceptance of its mandatory jurisdiction and observance of the rules embodied in more than 100 international conventions that refer all disputes regarding their application and jurisdiction to the Court.

The United Nations Decade of International Law also witnessed the establishment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in 1996 and the adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in 1997 and the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings in 1996. As Members are aware, the States of the African Group have fully supported the adoption of these legal regimes, which seek, as a whole, to contain threats to international peace and security and to the principles of peaceful coexistence and good-neighbourliness, and seek to suppress and eradicate terrorism.

As far as combating terrorism is concerned, the Organization of African Unity has adopted an African convention on combating terrorism, thus taking the African continent a significant and pioneering step forward in uprooting international terrorism. In this regard, we believe that the United Nations is fully determined to eliminate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and that will no doubt lead us, before the turn of the century, to the development of appropriate programmes and foundations paving the way for

concluding a comprehensive international convention as a culmination of almost four decades of sectoral efforts to put an end to international terrorism.

If international efforts to draft legal instruments on various matters relating to the Decade have met with success and achievement, efforts made by national, regional and international organizations and institutions to promote training and assistance in the teaching, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law also deserve our appreciation. The African Group would particularly like to note with satisfaction the training and scholarship programmes on the legal aspects of debt and financial management developed by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research for public officials in sub-Saharan Africa. For the African continent debt and debt-servicing constitute a monstrous burden that seriously hampers the socio-economic development of the African people, threatening their peace and security and challenging the sovereignty and independence of African States.

As far as training and technical assistance are concerned, we call on all relevant international organizations and regional and international academic institutions — chief among them the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Hague Academy of International Law, the International Institute of Humanitarian Law and the International Bar Association — to continue their cooperation in developing training programmes and providing scholarships and grants to trainees from developing countries, because we firmly believe that the objectives of the Decade are sustainable goals and objectives that should be pursued well beyond the time allotted to them.

We also call on these organizations and institutions to devise innovative methods for relieving their financial constraints and not resort to down-scaling their training programmes or slashing their financial assistance to the trainees from developing countries or reducing their enrolment. We again call on these organizations and institutions to enhance their training and fellowship programmes in the field of international law by adopting sustainable plans for cooperation with our colleges and academic institutions in Africa and in other developing countries, and to reach out to these colleges and institutions in their native environments.

In this connection, we invite the International Committee of the Red Cross to take the initiative in coordinating a worldwide effort, together with Governments and with regional and international organizations, for the introduction of the teaching of international humanitarian law in African colleges and police and military academies.

In respect of the dissemination, teaching and wider appreciation of the principles of international law, we have to commend the role played by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs and its subsidiary bodies, including the Codification Division, the Treaty Section and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, in publishing United Nations legal works and facilitating easy access thereto through the Internet, thus availing the user of a wealth of diverse legal material.

Finally, we would like to reiterate what we have already mentioned — that is, the need for the future pursuit of activities and efforts aimed at realizing the objectives of the Decade of International Law. In this respect, we hope that the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly will embark on devising means and mechanisms that may facilitate its communication with academic institutions and universities and international law organizations and societies in all parts of the world, with the ultimate goal of spreading the rule and provisions of international law, mobilizing intellect and collective conscience for the maintenance of international peace and security and bolstering global cooperation in the best interest of all humanity.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon)(*spoke in French*): I wish to associate myself with the statement made a few minutes ago by Mr. Omer Mohamed on behalf of the Group of African States.

It is indeed a noble thing to extol the law. Ten years ago, in proposing to the United Nations General Assembly that it focus the attention and views of States on international law, the non-aligned countries forcefully illustrated their defiance concerning ideologies. And history has proved them right. In fact, over the past decade, the confrontation between the two blocs, which for a long time, since the end of the Second World War, fundamentally governed international relations has yielded to the emergence of new relations among States, relations of cooperation which are centred more and more on the rule of law.

Henceforth, the world no longer is deteriorating in bipolar relations of force, but rather is moving forward under the banner of globalization. However, this global world will have meaning only if it delivers more justice, tolerance and freedom — in brief, democracy. These objectives, however, would be inaccessible goals without the prerequisite of respect for the primacy of law: respect for the primacy of law within States, to be sure, but also and above all in the relations which States have with each other.

As everyone knows, one may have the fairest and most equitable code of laws, but if those who are supposed to apply the law and see that it is respected are not driven by real faith, that code of laws remains a dead letter. Consequently, the attention that the law demands deserves to be continued and sustained. This is why the four priorities assigned to the United Nations Decade of International Law must be ongoing goals.

That is why we must continue to work to bring about the acceptance of and respect for international law by all of the protagonists in the international community. We need relentlessly to advocate recourse to international law by these same protagonists in order to settle peacefully those disputes which may pit them against each other; pride of place must be given to recourse to the International Court of Justice. As the principal judiciary body of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice is a cornerstone of the present system for the settlement of international conflict and for bringing about peace in international society.

It is our duty to advance the progressive development and codification of all provisions likely to strengthen the vitality and the impact of international law.

Finally, it is our duty, through teaching, studies and all other appropriate means, to enable everyone to grasp the significance and the scope of and the need for international law in the edification and the advent of a world of peace. In other words, international law must be raised to the level of a universal culture. We need to acquire a genuine culture of law. Everything prompts us to do that and prepares us for so doing.

Thanks to a plethora of treaties, charters, pacts, declarations and conventions, humankind has acquired virtually all of the instruments necessary both to preserve international peace and security and to promote fundamental human rights and freedoms.

During the Decade of International Law alone, more than 70 multilateral conventions — in other words, an annual average of 7 — were adopted under the aegis of the United Nations. Among these conventions, there is one which forms a genuine turning point — indeed, as I said, a milestone — in the history of ethics and universal morality: the Statute of the International Criminal Court adopted on 17 July 1998 in Rome.

That jurisdiction, as the Assembly is aware, will have as its goal the campaign against the impunity of those who commit unspeakable crimes. On behalf of the international community, that Court will be able to prosecute and try any individual accused of crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Ultimately, the International Criminal Court will also have competence in the area of crimes of aggression — once such crimes have been defined. It is with pride that I recall that Cameroon is among the group of countries which very early worked in favour of the establishment of that International Criminal Court.

It is also with pride that I note that in the course of the Decade of International Law, Cameroon undertook a series of measures to guarantee the effectiveness of international norms. Allow me to cite the most important.

The Constitution of 18 January 1996 facilitates the integration of international conventions into the domestic juridical system and gives them a role which ensures their supremacy. That is the purpose and the meaning of article 45. Moreover, the Constitution integrates within the constitutional framework international instruments dealing with human rights which are regularly ratified. Hence, these instruments operate as the guidelines for any legal edict.

In June 1998, a technical committee was also established to follow up international instruments relating to human rights and freedoms. This committee facilitates and prepares for signature such instruments and sees to the implementation of obligations under conventions which derive from them. This therefore is a system of great importance designed to ensure acceptance of and respect for international law.

That body supplements and supports the National Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms established on 9 November 1990. The mission of the National Committee is to defend and advance human rights and freedoms. To that end, it hears any reports of cases of violations of such rights and freedoms and carries out

enquiries and investigations. It studies all issues related to the defence and advancement of human rights and popularizes instruments dealing with those rights.

As I stated, it is not enough for a State or for the international community to acquire the best legal instruments that exist. This valuable capital must be accompanied by two imperatives: on the one hand there must be a rigorous respect for the law, and on the other, there must be impartial application of that same law.

In a word, the citizens must have available the greatest amount of legal information, and professionals in the field of law, namely judges and all those who work in the field of justice, must be of sterling competence. This is why promoting education, study and broad dissemination of national and international law is of such fundamental importance.

Cameroon has carried on its standard actions within the framework of the teaching of international law. The Institute of International Relations of Cameroon remains a standard setter in this area for our sub-region and, to that end, is drawing up programmes in cooperation with numerous international organizations. The five law faculties in the country similarly attach great importance to the teaching of international law.

Along with these standard actions, for several years now we have been developing a campaign for the popularization of international instruments dealing with human rights, primarily through seminars, conferences and round tables, among other means.

One of the four priorities assigned to the Decade of International Law is, as was earlier recalled, the advancement of means and methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes among States, including recourse to the International Court of Justice and full respect for that institution, that is, full respect for its decisions.

This is an ongoing concern of the United Nations, as is broadly evidenced by a series of declarations and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. The most significant are the 1988 Declaration on the Prevention and Removal of Disputes, the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes, adopted in 1982, and the 1970 Declaration concerning the encouragement of friendly relations and cooperation among States.

My country's concern for the peaceful settlement of disputes is well known. His Excellency President Paul Biya has always been inspired by a deep-rooted conviction that there is no crisis which pits two States against each other and, *a fortiori*, no domestic crisis which cannot be solved through peaceful means. Aside from dialogue, the major tool available here is unquestionably the recourse to the law, and this is why we attach the highest priority to the settlement of disputes through judicial means when other types of mechanisms have shown themselves ineffective.

This doctrine, moreover, is also at the heart of the United Nations Charter. The obligation of States to settle their disputes peacefully must have a profound impact on their behaviour. In other words, this obligation prompts States to attach higher priority to the constructive instrument of the law than to the destructive instrument of war machines. This is the price of international peace and security.

The United Nations has affirmed the primacy of international law more than any other institution, and it has made efforts to guarantee it in practice. It is of the greatest significance that the founders of our Organization inscribed in the Preamble to the Charter the determination of the peoples of the United Nations "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained".

The establishment of and respect for the rule of international law are therefore of the highest priority. Without the rule of law, mankind cannot achieve peace or justice or freedom or security — all prerequisites for the harmonious development of every society.

Regardless of the shortcomings of the law, it has not been demonstrated that a society without law can promote peace and security. The lack of standards of reference promotes the development of relations of brutality and pure force and kindles feelings of frustration in those who have been excluded regarding their ability to transcend that contradiction inherent in impotence in the face of today's problems.

Humanity's survival instinct therefore calls for the acceptance of reasonable and reasoned language in international relations. The powerful must moderate their desires and the weak must find reason to hope. Only law can offer this balance, and the precepts of that law have been set out in the Charter of the United Nations, which

represents a genuine cry of hope for a new form of humanity.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): It is an honour for my delegation to make this statement on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on this auspicious occasion marking the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law. For us, the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, this achievement bears a special significance since the initiative of the Decade was born within the Movement, in 1989. It is also equally fitting that it is on the eve of the new millennium that we are taking stock of the achievements of the Decade, which have served to strengthen the role and enhance the significance of international law in international relations.

The initiative that brought forth the Decade emanated from an extraordinary ministerial meeting of the non-aligned countries, held in 1989 at The Hague, to discuss peace and the role of international law in international affairs as part of the commemoration of the ninetieth anniversary of the first International Peace Conference of 1899. The non-aligned countries declared that all States, regardless of geographical circumstances or economic or military might, enjoy sovereign equality and that threats or use of force, economic coercion and all other actions directed at hindering the enjoyment of the aforementioned equality are contrary to international law and to the universal purpose of enhancing peace and security for all nations; that norms and principles of international law are the recognized and acceptable basis for the resolution of conflicts affecting international peace and security; that the strict observance of international law is the best guarantee for the preservation of peace and the promotion of justice; and that the further progressive development, consolidation and codification of international law are essential requirements for peace and justice in the world.

Most importantly of all, The Hague meeting proposed that the United Nations declare 1990 to 1999 the Decade of International Law and that the work of the Decade should promote the following goals and actions: first, the enhancement of peaceful methods for the settlement of disputes between States, including resort to the International Court of Justice and compliance with its judgments; secondly, the achievement of general and complete disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction; thirdly, respect for international legal principles against the threat or use of force, intervention, interference and other coercive measures in international relations; and lastly, the teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law.

The Decade of International Law has been an opportunity for Member States to accelerate work on the progressive development and codification of international law. In this regard, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/54/362, which enumerates the successes of the Decade. The report lists many of the activities undertaken to encourage the teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law. The many seminars, conferences, symposia, training workshops and meetings organized to discuss the various fields of international law have played an important role in this area. Empowerment through education is indeed the most pragmatic approach to strengthening the objectives of the Decade and has received wide support from all national, regional and international organizations.

The Non-Aligned Movement is grateful to the Governments of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Russian Federation for arranging the celebrations of the centennial of the first International Peace Conference this year. The themes of the first Peace Conference have been carried forward through this Decade, and it is fitting that the end of the Decade and the centennial celebrations should all be on the eve of the new millennium. The themes of both the Decade and the first Peace Conference will continue to remain relevant through the coming century. As we approach the close of the Decade, our task is to maintain the momentum gathered during the Decade and continue to preserve the political will necessary to achieve the objectives of the Decade.

For the Non-Aligned Movement, the Decade has indeed been a success in achieving universal recognition of international law as the basis for the preservation of peace and security for the next millennium.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of the Rio Group during the consideration of the agenda item entitled "United Nations Decade of International Law".

The holding of the first International Peace Conference at The Hague in 1899 has a historic significance for the development of the international legal order. Even though it took place at a time when the use of force in international affairs continued to be an acceptable concept and the idea of international law was not sufficiently rooted, the Conference and its results

decidedly fostered the conviction that only through common determination and efforts to overcome conflicts through dialogue could the scourge of war be avoided.

The commitments resulting from the Hague Conference did not prevent the resurgence of conflagrations on a global scale, but they did lay the groundwork for the gradual development and codification of international law in general, and specifically in areas such as arms control, the conduct of hostilities and the peaceful settlement of disputes. It is for this reason that the Rio Group is pleased with the holding of this commemoration.

We would like to express our appreciation to the delegations of the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the efforts that they have made to make the centenary of the Conference an event that will contribute to highlighting the importance of international law in relations among States.

International law has a more solid significance today than what was originally envisaged in 1899. The preamble of the San Francisco Charter makes it clear that one of the main reasons for the establishment of the United Nations was to create conditions conducive to maintaining justice and respect for obligations emanating from treaties and other sources of international law. We can say with certainty that international law occupies a predominant place in the Charter and that respect for its provisions is fundamental to the attainment of its objectives.

Unlike in 1899, today the non-use of force and the peaceful settlement of disputes are among the absolute obligations incumbent on all States and cannot be bypassed under any circumstances.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, respect for international law is a deep-seated tradition. That is why the member States of the Rio Group enthusiastically supported the decision by the General Assembly to proclaim 1990-1999 as the United Nations Decade of International Law. That proclamation, coming right after the end of the cold war, sent the message that now that the long-standing differences that had divided the world had been resolved, the United Nations had a fresh opportunity to reaffirm the rule of law and to promote its respect and development.

Ten years after that statement, we must evaluate the progress made. Significant events have taken place in the field of international law during this time. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea has entered into force and its institutions have been established, and instruments have been adopted that include the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. These are all clear examples of these positive development.

We note also that full respect for international law continues to be the principal challenge facing the international community. Although States have demonstrated their readiness to elaborate legislative norms, we are not seeing the same determination to respect them. Despite the existence of binding provisions, recent years have seen the emergence of conflicts that more than once have endangered international peace and security.

In addition, we note with concern the emergence of new ways of taking on obligations; an example is "soft law". In this way formal commitments can be avoided and leeway provided in determining the precise scope of the new provisions in terms of their binding nature.

Naturally this is not the scenario that the Rio Group would have liked to see at the end of this decade. We are well aware that we are not in the era of the major codification conferences of the past and that some of the items on today's international legal agenda fall more within the area of the gradual development of international law. However, and precisely for this reason, the development of international law is more important than ever. There are areas in which the absence of clear rules to guide States could lead to friction among them.

The Rio Group is convinced that we must redouble our efforts in the area of the promotion, acceptance and respect of international law, in ensuring its gradual development and codification, and in promoting its study, teaching, understanding and dissemination. The Decade has provided a great opportunity to highlight this need and has made it possible to register some progress towards achieving our goals. These cannot be attained, however, within a specific time period. Ongoing and sustained efforts will be required.

We are pleased that the draft resolution shortly to be adopted by the General Assembly on the subject recognizes this fact and is not aimed at wrapping up our efforts in this area. The Assembly will continue to monitor progress in the implementation of the objectives

of the Decade well beyond its end, and the Rio Group is committed to participating fully in this effort.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to express my appreciation for the convening of this meeting and to welcome the opportunity afforded us by the Secretary-General to reflect collectively on the closing of the United Nations Decade of International Law.

I should like also to thank the Secretary-General for his lengthy report on the subject, which is a valuable source of reference material and information on the implementation of the Decade's Programme.

Let me also express our recognition to all of those countries — some of which, like mine, have very modest resources — that have carried out activities and taken initiatives at the national and international levels to mark the closing of the Decade.

The Cuban delegation considers that all of the activities and initiatives carried out during the Decade have been invaluable. They reflect the aspirations of all peace-loving men and women, whose hope it is that the international community as a whole will respect international law.

For the Cuban delegation, the closing of the Decade represents a starting point for the renewed commitment of Member States to re-establishing the primacy, the full force and inviolability of the Charter of the United Nations.

For my country, the preservation of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right of peoples to self-determination are all principles that can never be renounced, bearing in mind that Cuba on many occasions has suffered, and continues to suffer, directly from the selective application and violations of international law.

The General Assembly has adopted many substantive resolutions on this subject. Of particular relevance, in the light of the current international situation, is resolution 44/23, which defines the main objectives of the Decade, including the promotion, acceptance of and respect for the principles of international law.

Resolution 44/23 further highlights in particular the fact that one of the purposes of the United Nations is the maintenance of international peace and security and, to that end, peacefully to settle, in accordance with the principles of justice and international law, any international disputes or conflicts that could threaten peace.

The delegation of Cuba considers that the United Nations Decade of International Law has contributed to the strengthening of international law and to its dissemination.

The most significant events of the Decade included the fiftieth anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations as well as the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and all of its institutions.

However, during this past decade, long-standing situations have persisted, and other events have occurred, in the field of international relations that require in-depth consideration and an assessment of their full impact in the area of international law.

The beginning of the Decade coincided with the end of the cold war, yet conflicts have continued to break out. The threat of the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction persists, and new forms of intervention and interference in the internal affairs of States have emerged, to mention but a few of the problems that persist at this century's end.

Given this situation, the Cuban delegation believes that, during this meeting, we must, first and foremost, reflect on the role that States are assigning to international law as a whole, and not merely conduct a formal assessment of the programme of the activities of the Decade at its end. We must also reflect critically on the challenges to international law.

During the Decade of International Law, States have increasingly advocated the settlement of disputes by judicial means. The considerable increase in the number of States resorting to the International Court of Justice to settle their disputes provides clear evidence of that development.

The establishment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the questionable and illegal establishment by the Security Council of special tribunals all point to an unwonted proliferation of international courts, although the establishment each of those courts has a different impact on the development of international law.

Nevertheless, in the view of my delegation, recourse to judicial means in the peaceful settlement of disputes reflects the keen desire of States for international justice,

and at the same time shows the increasing importance States attach to international law. However, we believe that in the search for international justice in this unipolar and deeply unjust world, the role of State Members of the United Nations is to reaffirm and strengthen the norms and principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations.

Given these circumstances, Cuba declares itself in favour both of defending the United Nations and of its in-depth reform. The democratization of the United Nations is indeed one of the most important contributions that Member States can make to the gradual development of international law and the way to give international law the place it deserves in international relations in the next century. In the face of this challenge, Cuba advocates bold, open, legitimate and urgent actions — actions that are never used to justify the abuse of power or the use of force by a few hegemonic Powers aimed at destroying our sovereignty and the principles that guarantee it, but rather to resolve both the deep-rooted causes and the dramatic events that have given rise to the humanitarian tragedies such as have taken place in some parts of our tumultuous world.

The use of force, selectivity, discrimination, the reinterpretation of the principles of the Charter and the consequent imposition of concepts that are alien to it can lead only to chaos and to the continued advancement of hegemonic interests.

The so-called concept of humanitarian intervention, which is not supported by the provisions of the Charter and is an unacceptable way of disguising interference and interventionism as humanitarian action, distorts the legal framework itself of the United Nations and will never lead to just and lasting solutions.

Peace cannot be imposed; it must be achieved through development and equality of opportunity for all citizens, with international law being acknowledged as the instrument by which States, especially small and poor States, can defend their future.

Once again, we call on the General Assembly to act decisively and urgently in each case and not to stand by passively when faced with violations of international law. Once again, we call for developing countries to be able to participate on an equal footing with developed countries in the codification and gradual development of international law as an essential premise for establishing a just and equitable international legal order in the next century.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.